

Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife Division
2012 Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative
Summary Handout

In 1971, Public Act 106, the Deer Range Improvement Program (DRIP) was created with revenues generated from the sale of deer hunting licenses. From each license, \$1.50 is allocated into a restricted fund to be exclusively used for deer range habitat improvement, management and acquisition. Using DRIP funds, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife biologists have a long and successful history of achieving impressive deer habitat improvements and restoration goals through collaborative partnerships. Wildlife biologists are seeking new ways to partner with private organizations to enhance habitat for white tailed deer on private ownerships across the Upper Peninsula (UP).

The Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative (DHIPI) is a cooperative Grant program being offered by Wildlife Division. This Initiative is designed to foster cooperative projects between the DNR and non-governmental organizations that will enhance deer habitat on private lands while educating the public about the importance and scientific principles of the work. New for 2012 the DNR has the authority to expend DRIP funds to support the DHIPI as formal Grants. However, your group may be required to initially incur the expenses associated with implementing the project and submit invoices for reimbursement (save all original receipts) depending on the nature of the proposed project. In 2012 a total of \$50,000 in DRIP funds will be made available through a competitive Grant application process. Grant proposals for deer habitat improvement projects seeking a minimum of \$2,000 and up to a maximum of \$10,000 will be considered. This Initiative will only be implemented in the UP at this time.

There are three primary Initiative goals that all nominated project proposals must include in order to be eligible for funding: (1) to produce tangible, on-the-ground deer habitat improvement benefits; (2) to establish or improve partnership's between the DNR and sportsmen's organizations or other partners which promote long-term cooperative relationships; and (3) to showcase these cooperative projects through a coordinated and preplanned communications strategy.

To be eligible to participate in this Initiative, an application must be submitted from a conservation organization, sportsperson group, non-governmental organization or local conservation district. They must have a formal mission that promotes wildlife conservation and/or hunting, as recognized by the DNR. They may be UP based or local chapters of state, regional, or national organizations. Private individuals, private hunting clubs, unrecognized organizations, city, municipal, township, county, federal or other state governmental entities and agencies are ineligible to apply directly for funding from this Initiative. They may, however, be third party cooperators to approved projects, where appropriate.

Partnership projects can be proposed for privately owned lands, industrial forests, Commercial Forest Act enrolled lands, or federal lands (partner organization must provide written proof of permission from landowner, representative, or administrator). Public accessibility is an important consideration and project lands which allow legal public access (foot traffic at a minimum) will be scored more favorably. State owned lands are ineligible for this Initiative (contact local wildlife staff for alternative

mechanisms for interest in state land projects). Projects on lands owned by municipalities, school forests, or other entities will be considered lower priority.

Specific examples of the desired types of proposals include: wildlife shrub plantings; tree plantings (i.e. mesic conifers, oak or other hard mast species, and/or fruit bearing or soft mast); scarification for regeneration of tree species; non-commercial timber stand improvement activities; direct mechanical habitat manipulation; wildlife opening creation, rehabilitation, or maintenance; warm or cool season herbaceous plantings; and plantings of DNR approved perennial species.

Specific proposed activities that will not be considered are: creation or maintenance of annual plant species such as corn, cereal grains, and root crops; plantings of exotics (non-native plant species), invasive, and non-DNR approved naturalized species; commercial timber sale preparation; and construction of ponds. Proposals that increase undesired habitat conditions, have human safety implications, are contrary to DNR policy/opinion, state or federal law, and/or will directly have adverse impacts on state or federally listed Threatened and Endangered species will not be considered.

Organizations considering participation in this Initiative are strongly encouraged to contact their local wildlife biologist as soon as possible to collaboratively develop suitable project proposals that are congruent with local featured species and Management Area concepts, deer population and habitat goals, local habitat considerations, and to optimize project benefits.

It is the responsibility of the partner organization to undertake an active role in the implementation of the project to the extent possible. The proposal should indicate specific plans on how the partner intends to accomplish the project. A 25% project cost share is required, which can be met through direct financial contribution, in-kind labor, or material contributions, etc. The DNR will assist with implementation where necessary. The final communications outreach strategy for an approved project will be coordinated by the DNR in conjunction with the partnering organization. The partnering organization should be prepared to be an active participant in outreach efforts.

Approved projects will require the partner organization or representative to be Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) compliant and a registered vendor with the State of Michigan to facilitate Grant funding. Additionally for approved projects, the sponsor organization will be required to sign a contract agreement and liability release which specifically defines deliverables and partner responsibilities.

Proposed projects will be evaluated by a multi-disciplinary selection committee on the following six criteria: production of tangible deer habitat enhancement benefits; logistical feasibility of the proposal; public accessibility and/or proximity to public lands; partner organization's experience in successfully completing similar projects; partner cost share and planned project implementation; and proposed communications strategy.

Complete application information including the application form, detailed Initiative description, proposal requirements and criteria, eligibility rules, funding limitations, and related materials are available upon request from the Initiative biologist, Bill Scullon, DNR, Norway Field Office, 520 West US Hwy 2, Norway MI 49870, telephone 906-563-9247, fax 906-563-5820 or email Scullonh@michigan.gov.

Completed applications will be due by close of business on March 31, 2012. Notification of project approval or denial will be sent by April 14, 2012. Implementation of approved projects will be at the discretion of the DNR and funding availability. Failure to meet project obligations or noncompliance as spelled out in the project prescription and agreement may result in partner's future ineligibility.